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## **Media Release**

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### **Biden, Markell, Lawmakers Unveil Plan Targeting Hardcore Drunk Drivers Bill backed by law enforcement around-the-clock monitoring, longer prison sentences**

Dover – Governor Jack Markell, Attorney General Beau Biden, state legislators and members of Delaware’s law enforcement community highlighted a proposal Tuesday to keep more drunk drivers off our roads.

House Bill 168, sponsored by Rep. Helene M. Keeley and Senate Majority Leader Patricia Blevins, calls for enhanced prison sentences, 24-hour monitoring, and intensive counseling for individuals convicted of multiple DUI offenses. The new sentencing requirements kick in with the third conviction.

For repeat DUI offenders, enhanced minimum prison sentences start with 6 months for the third offense, increasing to 5 years for the seventh and subsequent offenses. These sentences can be cut in half if the offender complies with monitoring and treatment, but are still longer than sentences that repeat offenders currently face. Under this bill, as part of their probation, offenders will be prohibited from consuming any alcohol for the first 90 days after their release from prison, and to ensure this occurs, offenders will wear an ankle bracelet that can detect alcohol in their bodily fluids. If an offender consumes alcohol during this period, the transdermal alcohol monitoring device will alert the probation officer and a violation may result in the offender returning to prison.

"When you make the decision to drive drunk, you are making the tragic decision to put lives at risk. To those careless or callous enough to become a multiple offender, know that this law will put you in jail," Markell said.

"A car with an impaired driver behind the wheel is a lethal weapon," said Biden, whose office spent nearly two years developing the legislation in consultation with state agencies, legislators and other stakeholders. "We cannot keep arresting the same drunk drivers over and over again; we need a more effective approach. The new prison sentences combined with vigorous monitoring and treatment will get drunk drivers off the streets and give them help and motivation to stay sober."

HB 168 will be considered Wednesday afternoon in the House Public Safety Committee. A companion bill, HB 174 on vehicular assault and homicide, will be considered earlier Wednesday by the House Judiciary Committee.

Rep. Helene M. Keeley, who is the lead sponsor of HB 168, said the legislation would increase penalties for repeat DUI offenses and require more treatment and monitoring to reduce recidivism.

"Many of us have seen in the press reports of people being arrested for their fifth, sixth and even seventh DUI. These repeat offenders are putting thousands of innocent people on the roads at risk and are a danger to society," said Rep. Keeley, D-Wilmington South. "By strengthening the penalties and requiring more intensive treatment and monitoring, we can save lives by keeping dangerous drivers off the road, and hopefully they will get the help they need to not drive drunk again. "

"This is a long-overdue update to our DUI laws," said Senate Majority Leader Patricia Blevins, D-Elsmere, "This is important not only because it is tougher on repeat offenders, but because it requires counseling and monitoring to ensure that those found guilty of DUI are obeying restrictions on drinking."

The bill has the support of Col. Robert Coupe of the Delaware State Police, Newport Police Chief Michael Capriglione, President of the Delaware Police Chiefs Council, and other leaders of Delaware police forces.

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